

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 SAM-01 /086 W

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R 151715Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY RABAT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5982

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

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AMEMBASSY TUNIS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR PBOR PORG ICJ MO SS SP AG MR

SUBJ: SPANISH SAHARA: PUBLIC EXPECTATIONS AND INITIAL REACTIONS
TO ALGERIAN ICJ PRESENTATION

1. SUMMARY: MOROCCAN PRESS GIVING CLOSE ATTENTION TO ALGERIAN ICJ PRESENTATION WHICH BEGAN THIS WEEK AND IS SEEN AS ACID TEST OF ALGERIAN INTENTIONS RE RAPPROCHEMENT WITH MOROCCANS. SEMI-OFFICIAL PRESS COVERAGE OF EVENT IS FAVORABLE THUS FAR, AND WE WOULD EXPECT GOM TO CONTINUE PUTTING BEST FACE ON IT BARRING UNFORESEEN NEGATIVE "SURPRISE." MEANWHILE, SEMI-OFFICIAL MEDIA DOWNPLAYING ANY ICJ DIFFERENCES WITH MAURITANIA. DETAILS FOLLOW. END SUMMARY.

2. GOM'S PUBLIC POSITION ON ALGERIA WAS RESTATED IN AUTHORITATIVE JULY 12 SEMI-OFFICIAL PRESS EDITORIAL (WHICH
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ALSO DISCUSSED MOROCCAN POSITION ON SPAIN -- RABAT 3412).

EDITORIAL EXPRESSED SATISFACTION WITH GROWING ALGERIAN COMPREHENSION ON SAHARA, BUT SAID "AN EVEN CLEARER POSITION, WHICH WOULD DISSIPATE ALL AMBIGUITY WITH REGARD TO OUR SAHARA" WAS NEEDED. ALGERIAN PRESENTATION BEFORE ICJ BEGINNING JULY 14, EDITORIAL NOTED, WAS "MOMENT OF TRUTH...IN WHICH ALGERIA CAN CLEARLY DECLARE THAT SAHARA IS MOROCCAN." MOROCCAN "PUBLIC OPINION" WILL NOT BE COMPLETELY SATISFIED WITHOUT SUCH A DEMONSTRATION OF SOLIDARITY, EDITORIAL ASSERTED.

3. ALGERIA BEGAN ITS PRESENTATION IN "SPIRIT OF BROTHERHOOD AND FRIENDSHIP," ACCORDING TO SEMI-OFFICAL PRESS HEADLINE JULY 15. STRESS LAID ON ALGERIAN REP BEDJAOUT'S REPORTED COMMENT THAT ALGERIA CLAIMED NO HISTORIC SOVEREIGNTY OF ANY KIND OVER SAHARA, BUT TEXT OF AFP ARTICLE ALSO NOTED HIS REAFFIRMATION THAT ALGERIA'S BORDER WITH TERRITORY MAKES HER "INTERESTED PARTY" AND GIVES HER RIGHT TO BE HEARD ON FUTURE OF SAHARA. HEADLINES ALSO FEATURED REMARKS BY ZAIRE REP THAT HISTORIC TIES TO SAHARA EASIER TO DEMONSTRATE FOR MOROCCO (I.E., THAN FOR MAURITANIA) BECAUSE MOROCCO WAS ALREADY INDEPENDENT STATE WHEN SPANISH OCCUPIED SAHARA. NO EMPHASIS GIVEN TO HIS QUALIFYING COMMENT THAT MOROCCAN TIES PROVEN TO EXIST "WITH AT LEAST PART" OF SAHARA. ZAIRE REP'S REJECTION OF CONCEPT OF "TERRA NULLIUS" AND CALL ON SPAIN TO "GIVE IN TO HISTORICAL EVIDENCE" BRIEFLY REPORTED AS WELL.

4. OPPOSITION ISTIQLAL'S L'OPINION, WHICH HAS LED ANTI-ALGERIAN RHETORIC IN PAST, DEVOTED ITS COVERAGE FROM SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY TO ZAIRE REP'S REMARKS ON MOROCCAN TIES, REJECTION OF TERRA NULLIUS CONCEPT, AND POINT THAT MAURITANIAN LEGAL TIES TO SAHARA DEPENDED ON "SOCIO-CULTURAL ELEMENTS." MENTION OF ALGERIA LIMITED TO COMMENT THAT ALGERIAN PRESENTATION CONTAINED NOTHING NEW AND REAFFIRMED POSITION CONCERNING FUTURE OF SAHARA.

5. ON MAURITANIAN ICJ PRESENTATION, SEMI-OFFICIAL PRESS EDITORIAL JULY 15 RECOGNIZED THE DIVERGENCE OF MAURITANIAN PRESENTATION, WHICH ENDED JULY 10 (RABAT 3373), FROM GOM LINE. EDITORIAL, SOMEWHAT MIFFED IN TONE, DOWNPLAYED EFFECTIVENESS OF MAURITANIAN ATTEMPTS TO DEMONSTRATE HISTORIC TIES LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WITH SOUTHERN PART OF SAHARA AND EVEN BROUGHT UP HOARY CONTENTION THAT PRESENT MAURITANIA, UNTIL ITS OCCUPATION BY FRENCH, WAS PART OF KINGDOM OF MOROCCO. NEVERTHELESS, EDITORIAL CONCLUDED, ESSENTIAL POINT IS THAT TWO COUNTRIES WILL BE ABLE TO "SOLVE THEIR PROBLEMS, SAFEGUARD THEIR ENTENTE, AND PRESERVE THEIR UNITY" DESPITE DIFFERENCE IN PRESENTATION OF THEIR VIEWS. MEANWHILE, PRESS CONTINUES TO GIVE DAILY COVERAGE TO "SUCCESSES" OF MAURITANIAN-MOROCCAN JOINT DIPLOMACY IN

AFRICA AND MIDDLE EAST.

6. COMMENT: ALGERIA'S ICJ PRESENTATION THUS FAR HAS NOT LIVED UP TO GOM PUBLIC EXPECTATIONS AS EXPRESSED IN JULY 12 EDITORIAL. STILL, MOROCCAN CALL FOR ALGERIAN DECLARATION THAT SAHARA IS MOROCCAN IS OPTIMUM STANCE AND MAY BE DESIGNED PARTLY FOR DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION. IT SEEMS TO US THAT VERY BEST MOROCCANS COULD HOPE FOR WOULD BE ALGERIAN URGING OF SPAIN TO COME TO TERMS WITH MAURITANIA AND MOROCCO, ALONG LINES OF ZAIRE REP'S REPORTED POSITION. WHETHER OR NOT THIS ACTUALLY COMES TO PASS, WE WOULD EXPECT GOM TO PUT BEST PUBLIC FACE EVEN ON NUANCED ALGERIAN PRESENTATION, UNLESS ALGERIAN SPRING AN UNPLEASANT SURPRISE.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ARBITRATION, FOREIGN RELATIONS, PRESS COMMENTS, TERRITORIAL CLAIMS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 15 JUL 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CunninFX
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975RABAT03434
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750244-0918
From: RABAT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750755/aaaabxbb.tel
Line Count: 129
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 20 MAY 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <20 MAY 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <02 OCT 2003 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SPANISH SAHARA: PUBLIC EXPECTATIONS AND INITIAL REACTIONS TO ALGERIAN ICJ PRESENTATION
TAGS: PFOR, PBOR, PORG, MO, SS, SP, AG, MR, ICJ, (HASSAN II)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006